

Job 20:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I have heard the check of my reproach, and the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer.

Analysis

I have heard the check of my reproach (מוסר קלה אַשְׁמָה, musar kelimati eshma)—The word מיסר (musar) means 'discipline, correction, reproof,' but here 'check' in the sense of 'rebuke.' Zophar claims to have heard קלה (kelimah, 'reproach, insult, shame'). He takes Job's critique of the friends' counsel (ch. 16-17) as personal affront.

And the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer (רוח מִבִּנְתִּי יִעֲנֶנִּי, veruach mibinati ya'aneni)—Zophar appeals to רוח (ruach, 'spirit/wind') and בינה (binah, 'understanding, discernment'). Ironically, he claims spiritual insight while demonstrating spectacular misunderstanding. This represents religion's perpetual danger: confusing confidence with correctness, fervor with truth.

Historical Context

Ancient wisdom literature distinguished between knowledge (דעת, da'at), understanding (בינה, binah), and wisdom (חוכמה, chokmah). Zophar claims binah—discernment to perceive truth—but the book's narrative frame (chs. 1-2, 42) proves him wrong. God will eventually rebuke the friends (42:7): 'you have not spoken of me the thing that is right.'

Related Passages

[Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth](#)

Study Questions

1. When have you confused your passionate conviction for spiritual discernment?
2. How does Zophar's claim to 'the spirit of my understanding' warn against presuming divine authorization for our opinions?
3. What's the difference between confidence that comes from the Spirit versus confidence that comes from personality or rhetoric?

Interlinear Text

מִבְנַת־ רַ� אַשְׁמָה עַל־ כָּלָמַת־ מִזְבֵּחַ
the check of my reproach I have heard and the spirit of my understanding
H4148 H3639 H8085 H7307 H998

יְצַתֵּת:

causeth me to answer

H6030

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